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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 001242

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAID PREF I2 WFP

SUBJECT: TFIZ01: USAID/PRM DART UPDATES FROM SOUTHERN IRAQ

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SUMMARY  
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¶11. On 31 March, DART members, accompanied by Coalition forces, conducted a rapid assessment of Basra International Airport and a water treatment plant located on the airport property. On 2 April, the DART received updates from Coalition forces on the status of Umm Qasr Port, as well as food and water distributions in southern Iraq. END SUMMARY.

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BASRA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND WATER TREATMENT PLANT  
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¶12. On 31 March, DART members, accompanied by Coalition forces, traveled to Basra International Airport (BIA). BIA is a modern facility with large amounts of ground handling equipment in good working order. The DART noted two K-Loaders, one two-ton forklift, one one-ton forklift, and six to eight pallet trailers for moving commodities. There are several tank and armored personnel carrier hulks that must be dragged back from the edge of the runway in order to meet minimum requirements. The DART observed one small twin-engine aircraft at the northwest end of airport, but its condition was unknown. There is also a fully intact air traffic control tower, reportedly in excellent shape. However, there was no electricity at the airport at the time of the DART assessment.

¶13. The runway is now clear, following debris removal, and will be ready for use by C-130 aircraft shortly. No cratering on the surface of the runways was observed. The DART drove the length of the main runway and observed little to no stress cracks or surface deterioration. Hazardous materials, including leaking fuel tanks, spilled oil, and unexploded ordinance, were observed at the airport.

¶14. The DART also performed a rapid assessment of the water treatment plant located on the airport property, approximately 200 meters west of the administration buildings. The DART felt that the plant contained an unusually complex and refined water treatment process for a drinking water treatment plant. In addition, some unexpected hazardous chemicals were discovered at the site. Coalition Force engineers will be alerted to this assessment information.

¶15. There is also a second water treatment facility located on the eastern side of the airport that the DART was unable to visit for security reasons. Coalition forces informed the DART that the facility produces 4,000 liters of water per day, delivered by tanker truck to accessible areas of Basra. The water is drawn from the Al Basrah canal and the Al Aqi River, a tributary of the Shatt Al Arab. Disinfectants are currently not available to add to the water. Drinking water pumped into trucks for transport into Basra is not treated, and according to a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) the current water quality is the same quality as it was before the war. Analysis of a water sample collected at the second water treatment plant was positive for coliform bacteria. No organic chemicals were detected.

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UMM QASR PORT  
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¶16. On 2 April, DART members in Umm Qasr met with the Coalition's Chief Engineer for Umm Qasr Port. Coalition forces are attempting to restart port and silo operations amidst the chaos of large-scale looting. According to the

Chief Engineer, looters have stripped the generators used for the silo operation and conveyor belts, taking alternators and all of the generator's batteries. The residents appear to be emptying any containers they find to use for carrying water, often dumping coolant onto the ground, despite warnings from Coalition forces.

17. Coalition forces have restored electricity to 75 percent of the town. Restoring electricity to the final fourth of the city is dependent upon a connection to Basra. Coalition priorities are to get the silos between the old and new port operating. Some level of operation in the silo facility is estimated in four to six weeks. The forces are also trying to get two standby generators to function, which might allow the silos to be used to store grain. Nothing appears to be missing from the silos, the conveyor belts are continuous, and there is no obvious damage to the assembly. Coalition forces are optimistic that power can be restored to the facility so that the conveyor belts can be operated individually, if not automatically. It is estimated that the silos, which are twelve stories high, have a storage capacity of approximately 45,000 metric tons of grain, if not more.

18. According to the Coalition Chief Engineer for the port, the combined capacity of the old and new ports is larger than the Port of Gibraltar, with five miles of waterfront and one and a half miles of berthing in each of the old and new facilities. Although the rehabilitation of the ports is a long-term project, to facilitate their immediate use, Coalition forces are considering disconnecting the transformers and setting up a grid of approximately six generators, 200 to 500 kilovolts each. Once the generators are fired up, it can be determined how many of the cranes and other equipment are usable. In the opinion of the Chief Engineer, before the international community pours a lot of money into the Umm Qasr port, it should focus on Basra, which may be a better and even bigger port.

19. Within the next couple of weeks, the channel is expected to be de-mined. However, another Coalition source told the DART that dredging the channel may be beyond the scope of the dredgers at the port. Four mined hot spots have been identified in the channel, but to date only a 200-meter wide path has been cleared. That path is not large enough to handle ships the size of the two carrying the Australian-donated wheat. As a result, these ships may need to be diverted to Kuwait, or elsewhere, where the grain would be milled and then trucked into Iraq.

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#### Food and Water Distributions

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10. On 2 April, the DART met with Coalition forces and was informed that the proposed 3 April food distribution of food donated by the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society will be postponed. The DART members suggested a further delay of the planned food distribution in Umm Qasr as there is no immediate need for the relief supplies. DART members also suggested that either the DART or the World Food Program might want to contribute jerry cans to Umm Qasr for water collection, but Coalition forces said that many residents have adequate means of collecting water. Every two households in the town share a water tank, which might contain algae and other contaminants but are what the residents are accustomed to. Coalition forces report that no residents appear to be suffering from dehydration. With the opening of the water pipeline from Kuwait, Coalition-funded Iraqi drivers delivered 320,000 liters of water on 1 April.

11. UNICEF has focused its water distribution on Az Zubayr, allowing Coalition forces to concentrate water deliveries to Umm Qasr, Safwan, Umm Khayyal, Al Faw and Az Zubayr. However, the Coalition forces are anxiously awaiting the arrival of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations (IOs) to take over the water distribution.